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Is John Paisley Really Dead? Was He Really Deep Throat?

Here's a dark-horse candidate for the identity of Deep Throat: John Paisley.

More than a decade after Watergate forced Richard Nixon to resign the presidency, no one yet knows the identity of the prime source for *Washington Post* reporter Bob Woodward.

The 55-year-old Paisley, a long-time CIA agent, disappeared in the Chesapeake Bay on September 24, 1978, after using the radio aboard his 31-foot sloop, the *Brillig*, to tell friends he would be out past dark and to ask them to leave the lights on at his dock near Lusby, Maryland.

A day later, his unoccupied yacht ran aground near Point Lookout, at the mouth of the Potomac River. One week after that, a badly decomposed body with a bullet hole in the head and two diving weights strapped around the torso was found floating in the Bay at the mouth of the Patuxent River.

The body was identified as Paisley's—based on dental records and fingerprints—and was cremated before Paisley's family could view it. Suicide was tentatively listed as the cause of death.

The CIA initially downplayed Paisley's CIA connections,

claiming that he was a low-level employee who had retired four years earlier. Actually, Paisley had joined the Agency in 1954, had risen to the post of deputy director of strategic research, and had served as a \$200-a-day "consultant" since his retirement, overseeing a team that assessed the quality of the CIA's studies of the Soviet Union.

Furthermore, Paisley was revealed to have been the CIA's liaison with the White House Plumbers, the group including G. Gordon Liddy and E. Howard Hunt that was created to plug White House leaks. The Plumbers planned such actions as the break-in of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office and the June 17, 1972, entry of the Democratic National Committee's headquarters at the Watergate.

Paisley's links to the *Post* are murky, yet substantial.

He is said to have participated in a swingers' club in the Virginia suburbs whose members included several CIA officials and a member of the *Post*'s Watergate investigative force. Paisley's nickname within the sex ring: Deep Throat.

And Paisley supposedly carried a card that falsely identified him as a *Washington Post* deliv-

ery man; he once climbed from a *Post* truck over the wall of the Soviet Embassy. Allegedly, the Coast Guard called the *Post* immediately after the body was recovered from Chesapeake Bay.

Paisley's death has been cloaked in mystery for more than six years. The body recovered from the Bay was substantially shorter and lighter than Paisley; the position of the bullet wound in the head makes it unlikely that a right-handed man such as Paisley could have shot himself there. Members of his immediate family doubt that the body identified as Paisley's was his.

So questions remain about Paisley: Is he dead? If so, did he commit suicide? Or was he murdered? And by whom—the CIA, the Russians, a rival lover? Or did he defect? And was the swingers' club the only place he was known as Deep Throat?

Washington author Jim Hougan, who has just published a controversial analysis of Watergate. *Secret Agenda*, has another Deep Throat candidate: Bobby Ray Inman, the former deputy director of the CIA. Like the 41-year-old Woodward, Inman, 53, once held a sensitive post in Naval Intelligence, finally rising to director. Inman also served as director of the National Security Agency.

When Hougan asked Inman recently if he was Deep Throat, Inman denied it, pointing out that he had left Washington during



John Paisley
Was Deep Throat Deep-Sixed?

the Watergate period. Inman actually left for an assignment in Hawaii in December 1973. Woodward's last conversation of substance with Deep Throat was one month earlier.

But, Inman insisted, he couldn't have been Deep Throat. After all, he had called Bob Woodward and asked him if he was Deep Throat, and Woodward had said no. Hougan argues that this suggests Inman was at least a key source for Woodward; otherwise, why would he have to ask if he was the main source?

Inman resigned from the CIA in 1982. It was major news at the time. The reporter who got the scoop: Bob Woodward.

—ROBERT PACK